

Washington State Farmers Market Association – 2016 Annual Conference
Food Safety Communications Workshop
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Presenters: Laura Raymond, Washington State Department of Agriculture
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Small Group Activity

Imagine you are a Farmers Market Manager. What would be your Communications response in this scenario? Consider whether immediate public health actions should be taken. Identify your audience(s) and your message(s). Determine which methods you will use to communicate (e.g. phone calls, social media, print media, signage, etc.)

Scenarios:

1. A column is published in your local paper that implies food from small farms is not safe for a variety of reasons including that small and organic farms use manure and that food safety regulations do not apply to small farms and farmers markets where people are lax about food safety.
2. You are walking the market (as the market manager) and notice one of your farm vendors is offering a free plum to any child who is interested to snack on while their parents shop. The vendor does not say whether the produce has been washed. You don't notice any way for customers to wash the produce before consuming.
3. A customer stops by the market information booth with a concern/complaint about a meat vendor who is selling bad meat. The meat is out of the cooler and is not frozen any more. You suspect the meat is the display and not what is being sold but don't know for certain. He says, "I'm sure that's against some rule. Do you even have to follow those rules here?"
4. A local dairy initiates a voluntary recall after some of their product tests positive for listeria. The dairy does not sell at farmers markets directly but is well known as a local farm.
5. A customer stops by the market table very concerned about the safety of the produce, especially tomatoes, fresh herbs, and vegetables at the market. They've been reading about the Chipotle food-borne outbreak and that the problem might have been fresh produce from local farms. They thought e. coli was only a problem for meat and they are vegetarian. Now they are and are very concerned about the possibility of e.coli on the produce at the farmers market. "How do farms know if their produce is clean?" she asks.
6. A frozen treats (ice cream, fruit pops) vendor that sells regularly at your market lets you know that they are part of a recall effort. The supplier of their base ice cream is recalling product after lab tests showed contamination.
7. An irate shopper swears they got sick after eating something they purchased from one of the farm vendors. They are upset that the farm is not even willing to give them a refund. To your knowledge there have been no other reported instances of illness.

8. The local health department identifies the food truck that regularly sells at your market as one possible source of bacteria that has made several people sick. The truck operates out of a shared “commercial kitchen” used by several other food trucks. The specific source of the bacteria has not yet been identified.
9. A processing plant that makes their facility available to regional farms is linked to a food-borne illness outbreak in your city; it affects a number of farmers that you are associated with, but none of the farmers are at your market. Lots of customers are coming to your tent to ask questions.
10. There is a food borne illness outbreak at one of the well-known farms that comes to your Sunday morning market. The people who have reported becoming ill are all members of the farm’s CSA which is delivered on Thursdays. So far there have been no reported illnesses from shoppers at your market.